

(12) **United States Patent**
Mathison

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,464,762 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Oct. 11, 2016**

(54) **HYDROGEN FUEL DISPENSER WITH
PRE-COOLING CIRCUIT**

USPC 141/82, 83, 94, 95, 98
See application file for complete search history.

(71) Applicant: **Honda Motor Co., Ltd.**, Tokyo (JP)

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(72) Inventor: **Steve Mathison**, Torrance, CA (US)

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(73) Assignee: **Honda Motor Co., Ltd.**, Tokyo (JP)

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 119 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/154,339**

(Continued)

(22) Filed: **Jan. 14, 2014**

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(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2014/0261874 A1 Sep. 18, 2014

Office Action of U.S. Appl. No. 14/203,702 dated Jul. 28, 2016, 23 pages.

Related U.S. Application Data

Primary Examiner — Timothy L Maust

(60) Provisional application No. 61/786,982, filed on Mar. 15, 2013.

Assistant Examiner — Randall Gruby

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Rankin, Hill & Clark LLP

(51) **Int. Cl.**

B65B 1/20 (2006.01)

F17C 13/02 (2006.01)

F17C 5/00 (2006.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

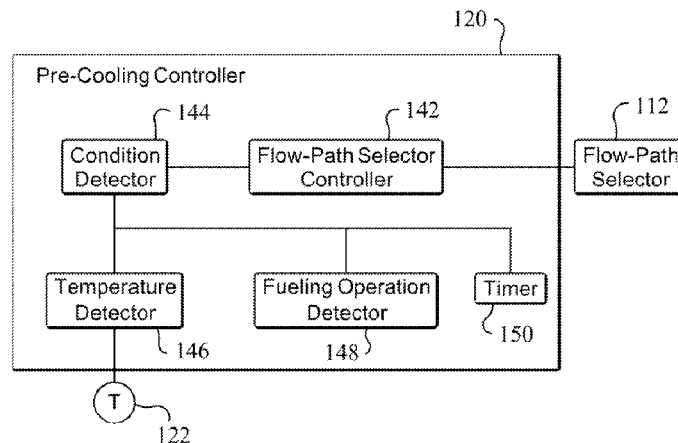
CPC **F17C 13/026** (2013.01); **F17C 5/007** (2013.01); **F17C 2205/0376** (2013.01); **F17C 2221/012** (2013.01); **F17C 2223/0123** (2013.01); **F17C 2223/036** (2013.01); **F17C 2225/0123** (2013.01); **F17C 2225/036** (2013.01); **F17C 2227/0337** (2013.01); **F17C 2227/0388** (2013.01); **F17C 2250/01** (2013.01); **F17C 2250/032** (2013.01); **F17C 2250/0439** (2013.01); **F17C 2260/023** (2013.01); **F17C 2265/065** (2013.01); **F17C 2270/0139** (2013.01); **Y02E 60/321** (2013.01)

A hydrogen fuel dispenser includes a pre-cooling circuit, a hydrogen fuel storage for storing hydrogen fuel, a nozzle for dispensing hydrogen fuel to a receptacle, and a fueling line connecting the hydrogen fuel storage to the nozzle for communicating hydrogen fuel from the hydrogen fuel storage to the nozzle. The pre-cooling circuit is provided to cool hydrogen fuel in the fueling line, and includes a pre-cooling line connected to the fueling line downstream from the hydrogen fuel storage, and a flow-path selector provided at a connection between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line. The flow-path selector selectively: blocks hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and a nozzle line of the nozzle; and opens hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line.

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC F17C 2227/0337–2227/0339; F17C 5/00; F17C 7/00; F17C 97/02; F17C 13/00; F17C 2250/04; F17C 2250/06

11 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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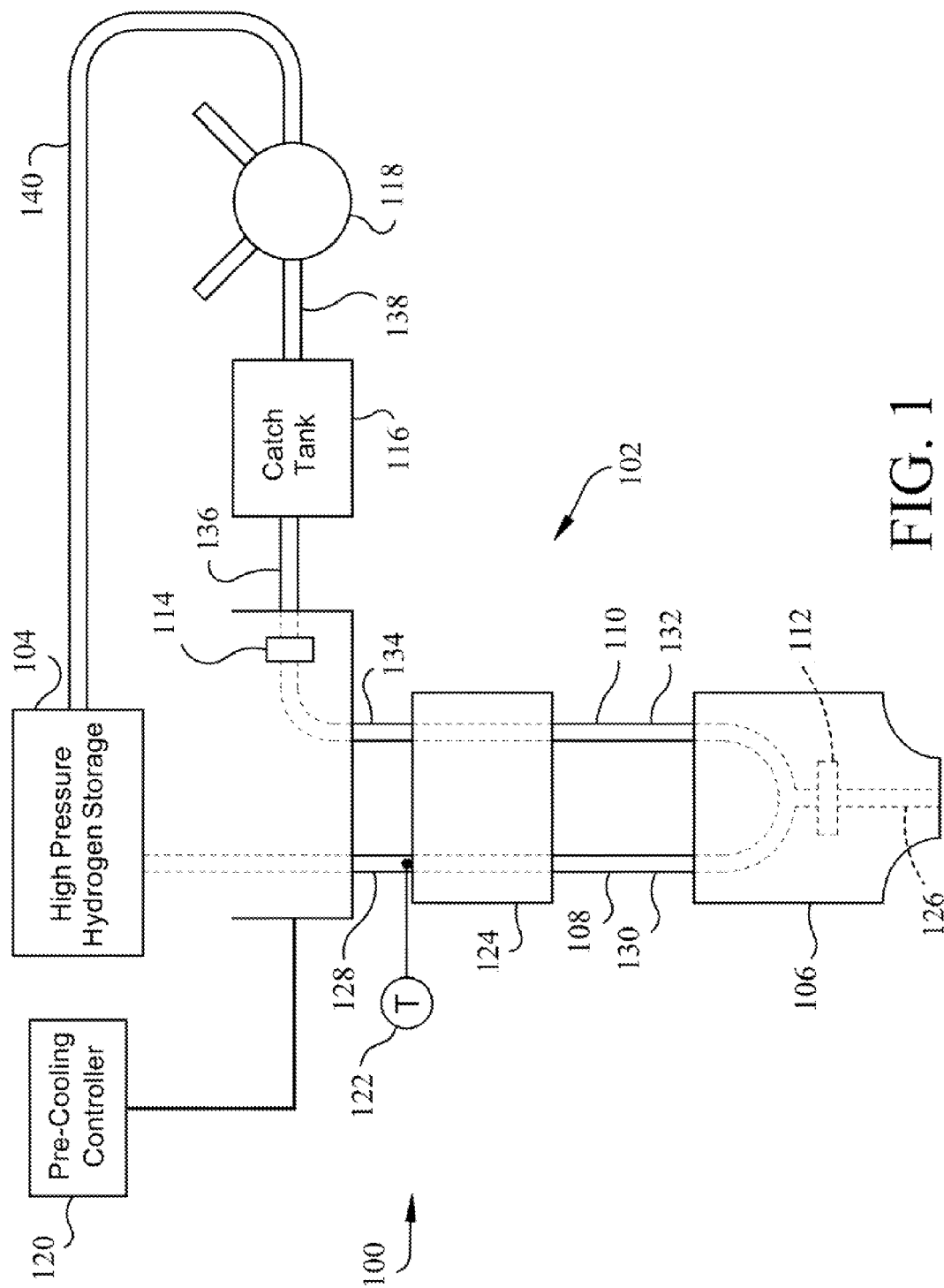


FIG. 1

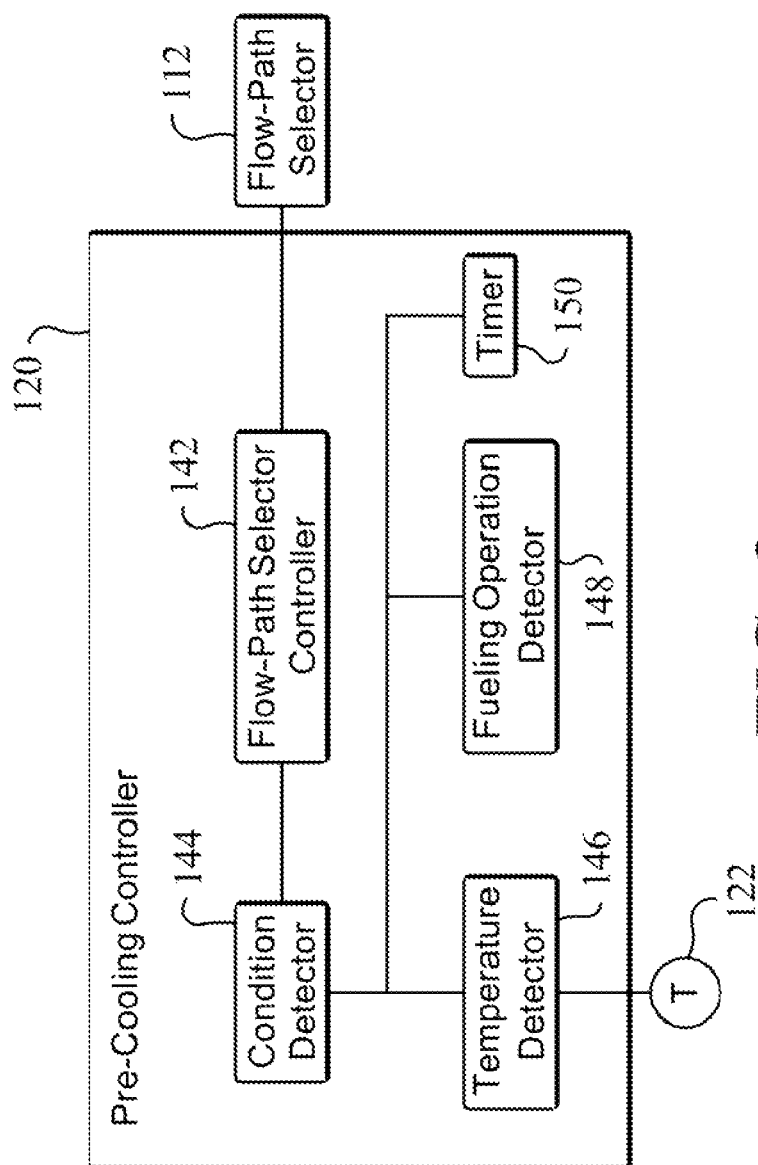


FIG. 2

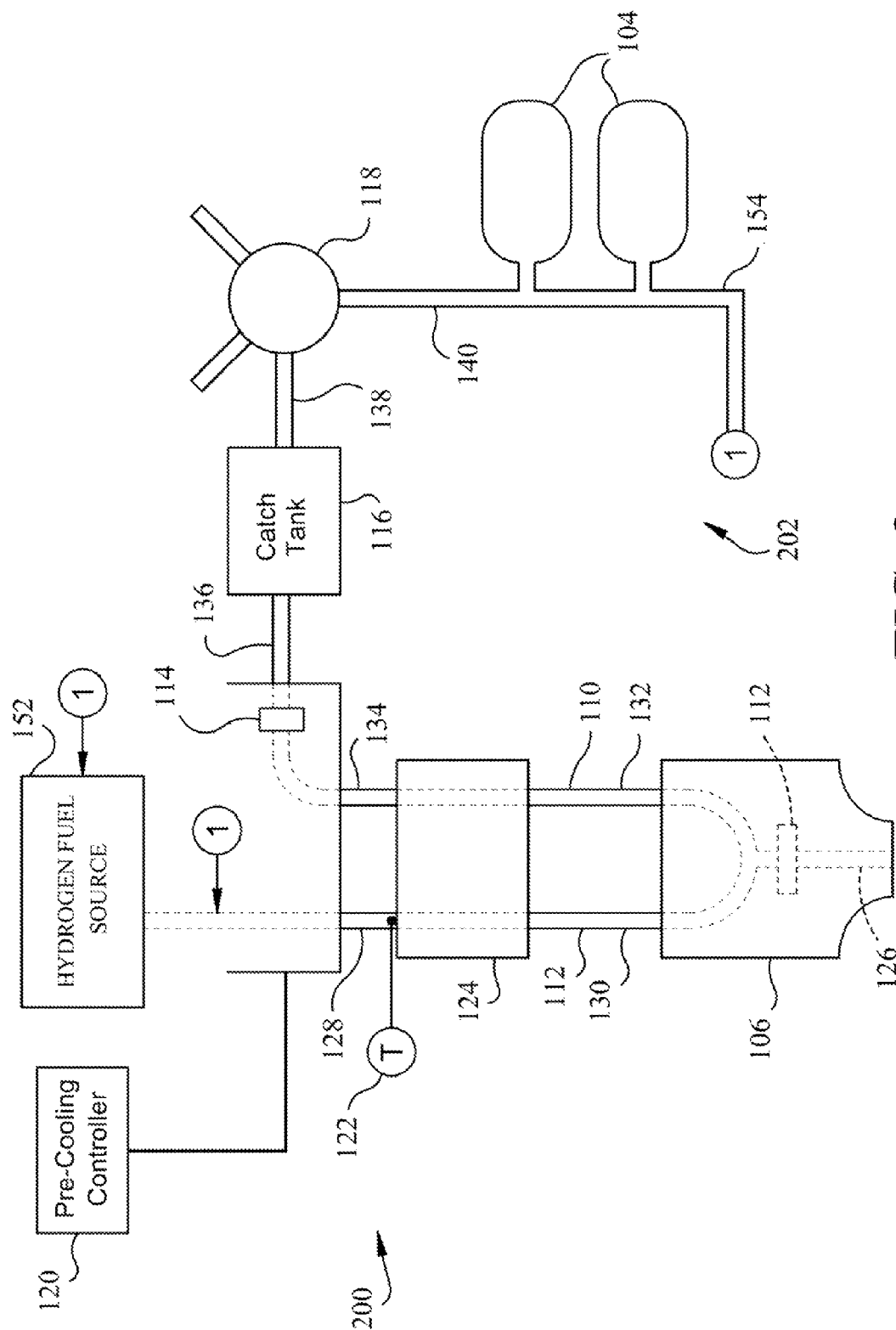


FIG. 3

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HYDROGEN FUEL DISPENSER WITH PRE-COOLING CIRCUIT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional patent application, Ser. No. 61/786,982, filed Mar. 15, 2013, the contents of which are hereby incorporated in full by reference.

BACKGROUND

Hydrogen fuel dispensers at hydrogen fuel filling stations are provided to dispense hydrogen fuel to a receptacle. For example, hydrogen fuel dispensers may dispense hydrogen fuel to a hydrogen fuel tank provided in a vehicle (automobile) configured to operate using the hydrogen fuel as a fuel source.

When performing a fueling operation, the hydrogen fuel dispenser may control the fueling in a manner that prevents the hydrogen fuel tank from overheating (to a temperature exceeding 85° C.) and/or from overfilling (to a pressure exceeding 125% of normal working pressure (NWP)). The control of the fueling operation by the hydrogen fuel dispenser may be influenced by a temperature of the hydrogen fuel at the outset of fueling. Accordingly, control of the fueling operation may be facilitated by having the temperature of the hydrogen fuel at the outset of fueling fall within a desired or predictable range.

However, the temperature of the hydrogen fuel at the outset of fueling may vary since the hydrogen fuel dispenser may be susceptible to heating between hydrogen fuel fills. In this regard, the hydrogen fuel dispenser may include components, such as those components through which hydrogen fuel flows, that are exposed to an external environment. When the hydrogen fuel dispenser is not used for a period of time, the components of the hydrogen fuel dispenser may warm up. This warming may be a result of the sun hitting the hydrogen fuel dispenser or the ambient temperature surrounding the hydrogen fuel dispenser, especially in warm climate locations. The heating of the hydrogen fuel dispenser may heat the hydrogen fuel, which may affect calculations performed by the hydrogen fuel dispenser when controlling the fueling operation of filling the hydrogen fuel tank (receptacle).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

According to one aspect, a hydrogen fuel dispenser includes a nozzle, a fueling line, a pre-cooling line, and a flow-path selector. The nozzle is for dispensing hydrogen fuel to a receptacle and includes a nozzle line through which hydrogen fuel is dispensed to the receptacle. The fueling line connects the nozzle line to a hydrogen fuel storage for communicating hydrogen fuel from the hydrogen fuel storage to the nozzle line. The pre-cooling line is connected to the fueling line downstream from the hydrogen fuel storage for pre-cooling hydrogen fuel. The flow-path selector is provided at a connection between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line. The flow-path selector selectively blocks hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line, and opens hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line.

According to another aspect, a pre-cooling controller is provided for a hydrogen fuel dispenser having a fueling line

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connecting a hydrogen fuel storage and a nozzle line of a nozzle for dispensing hydrogen fuel to a receptacle, a pre-cooling circuit including a pre-cooling line connected to the fueling line at a position downstream from the hydrogen fuel storage, and a flow-path selector provided at a connection between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line. The flow-path selector selectively blocks hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line, and opens hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line. The pre-cooling controller includes a condition detector and a flow-path selector controller. The condition detector detects a predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition. The flow-path selector controller controls the flow-path selector to: open hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected by the condition detector; and otherwise block hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line.

According to another aspect, a method is provided for pre-cooling hydrogen fuel in a hydrogen fuel dispenser that includes a pre-cooling circuit in the hydrogen fuel dispenser. The pre-cooling circuit includes a pre-cooling line connected to a fueling line of the hydrogen fuel dispenser at a position on the fueling line downstream from a hydrogen fuel storage and upstream from a nozzle line of a nozzle for dispensing hydrogen fuel to a receptacle, and a flow-path selector provided at a connection between the pre-cooling line and the fueling line. The method includes detecting whether a predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition exists. The method further includes controlling the flow-path selector to open hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected to exist, and otherwise controlling the flow-path selector to block hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The figures depict various embodiments for purposes of illustration only. One skilled in the art will readily recognize from the following discussion that alternative embodiments of the structures and methods illustrated herein may be employed without departing from the principles of the embodiments described herein.

FIG. 1 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary hydrogen fuel dispenser which includes a pre-cooling circuit in accordance with one embodiment of the present application.

FIG. 2 is a block schematic showing an exemplary pre-cooling controller of the dispenser shown in FIG. 1 in accordance with one embodiment of the present application.

FIG. 3 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary hydrogen fuel dispenser which includes a pre-cooling circuit which feeds hydrogen fuel to various portions of the hydrogen fuel dispenser in accordance with one embodiment of the present application.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Embodiments are now described with reference to the figures where like reference numbers indicate identical or functionally similar elements.

Referring to FIG. 1, a hydrogen fuel dispenser **100** (hereinafter, “dispenser **100**”) includes a pre-cooling circuit **102** for cooling hydrogen fuel between hydrogen fuel fills. In this regard, when hydrogen fuel flows through the hydrogen fuel dispenser **100**, it can cool the components of the hydrogen fuel dispenser through which it flows. Accordingly, the pre-cooling circuit **102** is provided to circulate the hydrogen fuel in the hydrogen fuel dispenser between hydrogen fuel fills so as to cool and/or prevent the heating of the hydrogen fuel and/or the components of the dispenser **100**.

The dispenser **100** may include a hydrogen fuel storage **104**, a nozzle **106**, and a fueling line **108**. The dispenser **100** may also include a pre-cooling circuit **102**, which may include a pre-cooling line **110**, a flow-path selector **112**, a back-flow valve **114**, a catch tank **116**, a compressor **118**, and a pre-cooling controller **120**. The dispenser **100** may also include a temperature sensor **122** in the fueling line **108**, and a breakaway **124** which engages the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110**.

The hydrogen fuel storage **104** may include one or more tanks in which hydrogen fuel is stored at high pressure. In the configuration shown in FIG. 1, the hydrogen fuel storage **104** communicates with the fueling line **108**. The below description describes the fueling line **108** as communicating directly with the hydrogen fuel storage **104**. However, the fueling line **108** may not directly communicate with the hydrogen fuel storage **104**.

For example, the hydrogen fuel storage **104** may also communicate with a hydrogen fuel source (not shown), which may be a large storage for hydrogen fuel. The hydrogen fuel storage **104** may communicate with the fueling line **108** in parallel with the hydrogen fuel source, with the hydrogen fuel storage **104** and the hydrogen fuel source each independently communicating with the fueling line **108**. Alternatively, the hydrogen fuel storage **104** may communicate with the fueling line **108** in series with the hydrogen fuel source, with one of the hydrogen fuel source or the hydrogen fuel storage **104** feeding into the other, which then feeds into the fueling line **108**.

The nozzle **106** may take the form of any element which is capable of engaging a receptacle (e.g., a vehicle hydrogen fuel tank) for dispensing hydrogen fuel to the receptacle. The nozzle **106** may include a nozzle line **126** with an output end provided to dispense hydrogen fuel at a portion of the nozzle **106** configured to be received in or at an opening of the receptacle.

The fueling line **108** may be a conduit which connects the hydrogen fuel storage **104** to the nozzle **106**. The fueling line **108** may take the form of one or more hoses, or any other elements capable of connecting the hydrogen fuel storage **104** to the nozzle **106** such that hydrogen fuel from the hydrogen fuel storage **104** is communicated to the nozzle **106** for dispensing to the receptacle. The fueling line **108** may connect to the hydrogen fuel storage **104** at a first end thereof, and to the nozzle **106** and nozzle line **126** at a second end thereof. The fueling line **108** may connect to the nozzle line **126** at a position within the nozzle **106**. The fueling line **108** thereby allows hydrogen fuel to flow from the hydrogen fuel storage **104** to the nozzle **106** and nozzle line **126** for dispensing into the receptacle.

The breakaway **124** may be provided along the fueling line **108** between the first and second ends thereof. For engagement with breakaway **124**, the fueling line **108** may include two portions: a first portion **128** extending between the hydrogen fuel storage **104** and the breakaway **124**; and a second portion **130** extending between the breakaway **124**

and the nozzle **106**. Each of the first and second portions **128**, **130** of the fueling line **108** may be connected to the breakaway via fittings, etc., which are not shown in the drawings. The first and second portions **128**, **130** of the fueling line **108** may be two separate pieces or two portions of a single conduit (e.g. a single hose), or may be two separate conduits joined to one another. The fueling line **108** defines a continuous conduit through the breakaway, so that even if provided as two separate pieces (i.e., the first and second portions **128**, **130** are separate pieces), the two pieces connect to define a continuous conduit.

The temperature sensor **122** may be provided along the fueling line **108** at a position within or in the vicinity of the breakaway **124**. The temperature sensor **122** may take the form of any temperature sensing element, and may sense the temperature of at least one of the hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108**, the fueling line **108**, the nozzle **106**, the breakaway **124**, and any fittings used to connect these elements to one another. In this regard, the temperature sensor **122** may include a plurality of temperature sensing elements (which may all be the same or different types of temperature sensing elements).

During a fueling operation, hydrogen fuel from the hydrogen fuel storage **104** may be communicated (i.e., flow) to the nozzle **106** via the fueling line **108**, and dispensed to the receptacle from the nozzle **106**. To perform the fueling operation, a user engages the nozzle **106** with the receptacle, and initiates hydrogen fuel dispensing from the nozzle **106** by, e.g., actuating a fueling button. The particular details of the hydrogen fuel dispensing are not described herein. It is to be appreciated that the dispenser **100** may include components and controllers not illustrated in the drawings or described herein for the purpose of performing and controlling the fueling operation. Once the hydrogen fuel dispensing is completed, the user disengages the nozzle **106** from the receptacle and the fueling operation is thereby discontinued.

Upon discontinuation of the fueling operation, hydrogen fuel may remain in the fueling line **108**. As the hydrogen fuel flows through the fueling line **108** during the fueling operation, it can cool the fueling line **108**, the breakaway **124**, the nozzle **106**, and any fittings used to connect these elements to one another. As time passes without a subsequent fueling operation, the fueling line **108**, the breakaway **124**, the nozzle **106**, the fittings, and the hydrogen fuel within these elements may be heated by the sun or the ambient environment. As noted above, this may especially be the case in warm climates.

The fittings used to connect the fueling line **108** to the breakaway **124** may have a lot of heat mass, and therefore may be susceptible to heating by the sun or the ambient environment. Furthermore, while the nozzle **106** and fueling line **108** may be covered with a rubber sheath, the rubber sheath may be black and therefore susceptible to absorbing heat. The heating of the fueling line **108**, the breakaway **124**, the nozzle **106**, and the fittings may result in a heating of the hydrogen fuel which is in the fueling line **108** or which passes through the fueling line **108** at a beginning stage of the fueling operation. This heating may affect the calculations performed during controlled operation of the dispenser **100**.

As noted above, to prevent this heating of the fueling line **108**, the breakaway **124**, the nozzle **106**, the fittings, and the hydrogen fuel between fueling operations, the dispenser **100** may be provided with the pre-cooling circuit **102**. Generally, the pre-cooling circuit **102** circulates hydrogen fuel to effect a cooling of the hydrogen fuel, the fueling line **108**, the

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breakaway **124**, the nozzle **106**, and the fittings. By cooling the hydrogen fuel and/or the components of the dispenser **100**, the hydrogen fuel temperature at the outset of the fueling operation may be maintained in a desired range, and fueling efficiency may be improved (i.e., a time for fueling while preventing overheating and overfilling may be reduced).

As shown in FIG. 1, the pre-cooling circuit **102** may include the pre-cooling line **110**, the flow-path selector **112**, the back-flow valve **114**, the catch tank **116**, the compressor **118**, and the pre-cooling controller **120**. The pre-cooling line **110** may be formed substantially similarly to the fueling line **108**. That is, the pre-cooling line **110** may be a conduit through which hydrogen fuel passes, and may take the form of one or more hoses or any other elements capable of allowing hydrogen fuel to flow therethrough and being formed in the herein-described manner. The pre-cooling line **110** is connected at a first end to the fueling line **108**, and communicates the fueling line **108** to the hydrogen fuel storage **104**. In this regard, the pre-cooling line **110** may be connected at a second end to the hydrogen fuel storage **104**, as shown in FIG. 1, may be indirectly connected to the hydrogen fuel storage **104**, or may be otherwise connected to communicate hydrogen fuel back into the fueling line **108**.

The pre-cooling line **110** may be connected to the fueling line **108** at any position downstream from the hydrogen fuel storage **104**. As shown, the pre-cooling line **110** is connected to the fueling line **108** in the nozzle **106** at a position in the vicinity of the connection between the fueling line **108** and the nozzle line **126**.

Along the pre-cooling line **110**, between the fueling line **108** and the hydrogen fuel storage **104** (or other terminal point of the pre-cooling line **110**), the breakaway **124**, the back-flow valve **114**, the catch tank **116**, and the compressor **118** are provided. The pre-cooling line **110** may include: a first portion **132** extending between the fueling line **108** and the breakaway **124**; a second portion **134** extending between the breakaway **124** and the back-flow valve **114**; a third portion **136** extending between the back-flow valve **114** and the catch tank **116**; a fourth portion **138** extending between the catch tank **116** and the compressor **118**; and a fifth portion **140** extending between the compressor **118** and the hydrogen fuel storage **104**. Each of the first to fifth portions **132-140** of the pre-cooling line **110** may be conduits through which hydrogen fuel is communicated from the fueling line **108** to the catch tank **116**, the compressor **118**, and the hydrogen fuel storage **104** (or other terminal point of the pre-cooling line **110**). The first to fifth portions **132-140** of the pre-cooling line **110** may be separate portions which are joined to the components provided on either end thereof, or may be parts of a common conduit (e.g., a hose).

The flow-path selector **112** may be provided at the connection between the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110**. The flow-path selector **112** is provided to selectively block/open communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110**, and the fueling line **108** and the nozzle line **126** (the nozzle). In this regard, the flow-path selector **112** may take the form of any element or gas flow controlling mechanism capable of regulating and controlling a flow of hydrogen fuel from the fueling line **108** to the pre-cooling line **110** and the nozzle line **126** (the nozzle). For example, the flow-path selector **112** may be a three-way valve.

The flow-path selector **112** is provided to change the dispenser **100** between a fueling state and a pre-cooling state. In the fueling state, the flow-path selector **112** opens a

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flow-path between the fueling line **108** and the nozzle line **126** (the nozzle) so as to open communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the two, and blocks a flow-path between the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110** so as to block communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the two. Therefore, in the fueling state hydrogen fuel may flow from the hydrogen fuel storage **104**, through the fueling line **108**, to the nozzle **106** and the nozzle line **126** for dispensing into the receptacle. Hydrogen fuel is prevented from flowing into the pre-cooling line **110**.

In the pre-cooling state, the flow-path selector **112** opens the flow-path between fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110** so as to open communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the two. The flow-path selector **112** may also block communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the fueling line **108** and the nozzle line **126** (the nozzle). Therefore, in the pre-cooling state hydrogen fuel may flow from the fueling line **108** to the pre-cooling line **110**. Hydrogen fuel may also be prevented from flowing into the nozzle line **126** (the nozzle).

The breakaway **124** may be provided along the pre-cooling line **110** at a position between the connection to the fueling line **108** and the back-flow valve **114**. Accordingly, the breakaway **124** may be provided between the first and second portions **132**, **134** of the pre-cooling line **110**. Each of the first and second portions **132**, **134** of the pre-cooling line **110** may be connected to the breakaway **124** via fittings, etc., which are not shown in the drawings.

The back-flow valve **114** may take the form of any element, valve, or gas flow controlling element. The back-flow valve **114** is operable to open and close a flow path through the pre-cooling line **110** between the second and third portions **134**, **136** of the pre-cooling line **110**. The back-flow valve **114** may be controlled (as described below) to block the pre-cooling line **110** when the dispenser **100** is in the fueling state so as to prevent hydrogen fuel from the fueling line **108** from reaching the catch tank **116**, and to prevent hydrogen fuel from the catch tank **116** from returning to the pre-cooling line **110** and the fueling line **108**. The back-flow valve **114** may be controlled (as described below) to open the pre-cooling line **110** between the second and third portions **134**, **136** when the dispenser **100** is in the pre-cooling state.

The catch tank **116** may include one or more tanks in which hydrogen fuel is stored at low pressure. When the dispenser **100** is in the pre-cooling state, hydrogen fuel from the fueling line **108** may be fed through the first, second, and third portions **132-136** of the pre-cooling line **110** into the catch tank **116**. The hydrogen fuel received in the catch tank **116** is at a low (relatively) pressure. The hydrogen fuel in the catch tank **116** may, at least temporarily, be stored therein.

The compressor **118** is disposed downstream from the catch tank **116**, compresses hydrogen fuel from the catch tank **116**, and passes the compressed hydrogen fuel to the hydrogen fuel storage **104**. Accordingly, the hydrogen fuel directed to and stored in the hydrogen fuel storage **104** is at high pressure. The compressor **118** may take the form of any element capable of compressing and/or pressurizing a gas that is suitable for the herein-described dispenser **100** and pre-cooling circuit **102**.

In operation, when the dispenser **100** is in the pre-cooling state, the flow-path selector **112** opens communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110** (and may block hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line **108** and the nozzle, i.e., the nozzle line **126**), and the back-flow valve **114** opens communication (hydrogen fuel flow) through the pre-cooling line **110**

between the second and third portions **134**, **136** thereof. Hydrogen fuel is then fed from the fueling line **108** to the pre-cooling line **110** and into the catch tank **116**. From the catch tank **116**, the hydrogen fuel is compressed by the compressor **118** and fed into the hydrogen fuel storage **104**.

This causes the hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** to move through the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110**, thereby cooling the fueling line **108**, the nozzle **106**, the breakaway **124**, any fittings provided along the fueling line **108**, and the pre-cooling line **110**. It is noted that by the configuration shown in FIG. 1, the pre-cooling line **110** runs parallel to the fueling line **108**, and connects to the fueling line **108** at a terminal end thereof. The pre-cooling line **110** is also connected to the breakaway **124** and nozzle **106**. By providing the pre-cooling line **110** and fueling line **108** in the shown manner, hydrogen fuel may flow through an entire length of the fueling line **108**, so as to cool all components along the fueling line **108** (e.g., the breakaway **124**, the nozzle **106**, etc.) Furthermore, this configuration may allow the breakaway **124** to be cooled by the hydrogen fuel flowing through the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110**. In this regard, the breakaway **124** may include several fittings and/or otherwise have a relatively high heat mass, and therefore may benefit from being cooled by the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110**. Further still, this configuration allows for a breakaway point to be provided in both the fueling line **108** and pre-cooling line **110** at the breakaway **124**.

In the pre-cooling state, the movement of hydrogen fuel through the fueling line **108** and into the pre-cooling circuit **102** may take place once, periodically, or continuously. For example, hydrogen fuel may be continuously circulated from the hydrogen fuel storage **104** through the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling circuit **102**. Alternatively, only the hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** at the time the fueling operation was discontinued may be moved through the fueling line **108** into the pre-cooling circuit **110**, or the circulation of hydrogen fuel through the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling circuit **102** may take place periodically.

The pre-cooling controller **120** may control the dispenser **100** to change between the fueling state and the pre-cooling state. The pre-cooling controller **120** may do so by controlling the flow-path selector **112** and/or the back-flow valve **114**. The pre-cooling controller **120** may include a flow-path selector controller **142**, a condition detector **144**, a temperature detector **146**, a fueling operation detector **148**, and a timer **150**.

The pre-cooling controller **120** may include one or more processors (arithmetic processors), computers, hardware elements, and software elements which are configured and/or programmed to provide above-listed components and to perform the herein-described functions. Particularly, each of the flow-path selector controller **142**, the condition detector **144**, the temperature detector **146**, the fueling operation detector **148**, and the timer **150** may be provided as one or more processors (arithmetic processors), computers, hardware elements, and software elements which are configured to perform the herein-described functions. It is to be appreciated that any of the flow-path selector controller **142**, the condition detector **144**, the temperature detector **146**, the fueling operation detector **148**, and the timer **150** may be combined with one another or provided as two or more elements.

The flow-path selector controller **142** may control the flow-path selector **112** to change the dispenser **100** between the fueling state and the pre-cooling state. The flow-path selector controller **142** may also be configured to control the

back-flow valve **114** to open and block communication through the pre-cooling line **110** between the second and third portions **134**, **136** thereof. Particularly, in the pre-cooling state, the flow-path selector controller **142** may control the flow-path selector **112** to open communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110** (and may also control the flow-path selector **112** to block hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line **108** and the nozzle, i.e., the nozzle line **126**) and to control the back-flow valve **114** to open communication (hydrogen fuel flow) through the pre-cooling line **110** between the second and third portions **134**, **136** thereof. In the fueling state, the flow-path selector controller **142** is configured to control the flow-path selector **112** to block communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the fueling line **108** and the pre-cooling line **110** while opening communication (hydrogen fuel flow) between the fueling line **108** and the nozzle line **126** (the nozzle) and to control the back-flow valve **114** to block communication (hydrogen fuel flow) through the pre-cooling line **110** between the second and third portions **134**, **136** thereof.

The dispenser **100** may be assumed to be in the fueling state unless a predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected by the condition detector **144**. In this regard, the condition detector **144** detects the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition, and when detected, communicates the detection to the flow-path selector controller **142**. The flow-path selector controller **142** controls the flow-path selector **112** and the back-flow valve **114** to place the dispenser **100** in the pre-cooling state when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected, and to otherwise place the dispenser **100** in the fueling state (i.e., when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is not detected).

The predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition may be any condition which indicates that the dispenser **100** may benefit from pre-cooling using the pre-cooling circuit **102**. In other words, the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition may be any condition which indicates that the fueling line **108**, the nozzle **106**, the breakaway **124**, or any fittings are (or are susceptible to) heating. For example, the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition may include one or more of: a temperature of hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** exceeding a predetermined temperature; a discontinuation of the fueling operation; and a passage of a predetermined time following discontinuation of the fueling operation without (prior to) resumption of the fueling operation.

One or more of the temperature detector **146**, the fueling operation detector **148**, and the timer **150** may be used, in conjunction with the condition detector **144**, to detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition. It is to be appreciated that any of the temperature detector **146**, the fueling operation detector **148**, and the timer **150** may be omitted when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition(s) used to control the flow-path selector **112** and the back-flow valve **114** (i.e., the dispenser **100**) do not require the information obtained/generated thereby. The below description will discuss the use of each of the temperature detector **146**, the fueling operation detector **148**, and the timer **150** in detecting the predetermined condition(s) associated therewith.

The temperature detector **146** communicates with the temperature sensor **122** to detect the temperature of hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108**. Particularly, the temperature sensor **122** senses the temperature of the hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108**, and communicates the sensed temperature

to the temperature detector **146** (i.e., the pre-cooling controller **120**). The temperature sensor **122** may be positioned between the hydrogen fuel storage **104** and the nozzle **106**, and so may sense the temperature of the hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** at a position between the hydrogen fuel storage **104** and the nozzle **106**. Consequently, the temperature detector **146** detects the temperature of the hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** at the position between the hydrogen fuel storage **104** and the nozzle **106**.

The hydrogen fuel temperature detected by the temperature detector **146** is communicated to the condition detector **144**. The condition detector **144** may then determine whether the hydrogen fuel temperature detected by the temperature detector **146** exceeds the predetermined temperature. If so, the condition detector **144** may detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition. Otherwise, the condition detector **144** may not detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition (i.e., may detect that the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition does not exist).

The predetermined temperature may be experimentally determined, modeled, etc., as the hydrogen fuel temperature within the fueling line **108** which may have an affect on the calculations performed during controlled fueling operations. Alternatively, the predetermined temperature may be experimentally determined, modeled, etc., as an upper limit of a desired hydrogen fuel temperature, or set arbitrarily.

The fueling operation detector **148** detects whether the fueling operation is taking place. Alternatively stated, the fueling operation detector **148** is configured to detect a discontinuation of the fueling operation (e.g., disengagement of the nozzle **106** from the receptacle).

The dispenser **100** may include any number of sensors or detectors which communicate with the fueling operation detector **148** to allow the fueling operation detector **148** to determine whether the fueling operation is taking place. For example, a sensor may be provided on the nozzle **106** to detect engagement of the nozzle **106** with the receptacle. When engaged, the fueling operation detector **148** may detect that the fueling operation is taking place; when disengaged, the fueling operation detector **148** may detect that the fueling operation is not taking place/is discontinued. Alternatively, a detection of flow rate of hydrogen fuel using a flow meter through any one or more of the fueling line **108** and the nozzle **106** may be used to determine whether the fueling operation is taking place.

The fueling operation detector **148** may communicate the detection of whether the fueling operation is taking place to the condition detector **144**. When the fueling operation detector **148** detects that the fueling operation is discontinued (not taking place and/or has stopped), and communicates this detection to the condition detector **144**, the condition detector **144** may detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition. When the fueling operation detector **148** detects that the fueling operation is taking place, and communicates this detection to the condition detector **144**, the condition detector **144** may not detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition (i.e., may detect that the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition does not exist).

The timer **150** detects a time passed following a discontinuation of the fueling operation. The timer **150** may communicate with the fueling operation detector **148** to receive an input at a time when the fueling operation is detected to be discontinued. The timer **150** then detects a time passed following the discontinuation of the fueling

operation without (prior to) a resumption of the fueling operation (i.e., a time between fueling operations).

The timer **150** may detect the passage of a predetermined time following discontinuation of the fueling operation without (prior to) resumption of the fueling operation. The predetermined time may be, e.g., experimentally determined, modeled, etc., as a time required for hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** to increase to the predetermined temperature. Alternatively, the predetermined time may be arbitrarily set.

The timer **150** may communicate with the condition detector **144** when the passage of the predetermined time following discontinuation of the fueling operation without (prior to) resumption of the fueling operation is detected. Upon receipt of this communication, the condition detector **144** may detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition. If this communication is not received, and when the condition detector **144** receives an input from the fueling operation detector **148** indicating that the fueling operation has resumed, the condition detector **144** may not detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition (i.e., may detect that the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition does not exist).

As an alternative to the above, the timer **150** may simply detect the time passed following discontinuation of the fueling operation, and communicate the time information to the condition detector **144**. The condition detector **144** may then determine whether the time passed, as communicated by the timer **150**, exceeds the predetermined time. If so, the condition detector **144** may detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition; otherwise, the condition detector **144** may not detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition (i.e., may detect that the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition does not exist).

Any or all of the above mechanisms may be used to detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition. Moreover, the above mechanisms may be combined with one another. For example, the condition detector **144** may receive inputs from all of the temperature detector **146**, the fueling operation detector **148**, and the timer **150**, and may detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition when at least one of: the temperature of hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** is detected by the temperature detector **146** to exceed the predetermined temperature; discontinuation of the fueling operation is detected by the fueling operation detector **148**; and the passage of the predetermined time is detected by the timer **150**.

As another example, the condition detector **144** may detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition when either: the temperature of hydrogen fuel in the fueling line **108** is detected by the temperature detector **146** to exceed the predetermined temperature; or passage of the predetermined time is detected by the timer **150**. As another example, the condition detector **144** may receive inputs from both the temperature detector **146** and the fueling operation detector **148**. In such a configuration, the condition detector **144** may detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition when both: the temperature detector **146** detects that the hydrogen fuel temperature exceeds the predetermined temperature; and the fueling operation detector **148** detects discontinuation of the fueling operation. Furthermore, the condition detector **144** may be operated by an operator to select the specific input by which the detection of the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is made.

As noted above, when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected by the condition detector

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144, the flow-path selector controller 142 may control the flow-path selector 112 (or the flow-path selector 112 and the back-flow valve 114) to place the dispenser 100 in the pre-cooling state. When the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is not detected by the condition detector 144 (i.e., is detected to not exist), the flow-path selector controller 142 may control the flow-path selector 112 (or the flow-path selector 112 and the back-flow valve 114) to place the dispenser 100 in the fueling state.

As also noted above, circulating the hydrogen fuel through the pre-cooling circuit 102 may be continuously performed once the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected, may be performed only for hydrogen fuel in the fueling line 108 at the time the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected, or may be periodically done. For example, the pre-cooling controller 120 may continuously monitor the hydrogen fuel temperature, and circulate hydrogen fuel through the pre-cooling circuit 102 only so long as the hydrogen fuel temperature remains above the predetermined temperature. Once the hydrogen fuel temperature drops below the predetermined temperature, the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition may no longer be detected (i.e., may be detected to not exist), and the flow-path selector controller 142 may control the flow-path selector 112 (or the flow-path selector 112 and the back-flow valve 114) to change the dispenser 100 from the pre-cooling state to the fueling state.

It is to be appreciated that while the pre-cooling controller 120 is described above as operating in consideration of the temperature of hydrogen fuel within the fueling line 108, the pre-cooling controller 120 may alternatively operate based on a temperature of any or all of the fueling line 108, the nozzle 106, the breakaway 124, and the fittings. That is, the temperature sensor 122 may measure the temperature of any or all of the fueling line 108, the nozzle 106, the breakaway 124, and the fittings, the temperature detector 146 may therefore detect the temperature of any or all of the fueling line 108, the nozzle 106, the breakaway 124, and the fittings, and the condition detector 144 may detect or not detect the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition based on the detected temperature of any or all of the fueling line 108, the nozzle 106, the breakaway 124, and the fittings.

The dispenser 100 and pre-cooling circuit 102 are described above as having the pre-cooling circuit 102 feed the hydrogen fuel from the fueling line 108 back into the hydrogen fuel storage 104 for high pressure storage, and eventual feeding back into the fueling line 108. However, the pre-cooling circuit 102 may be configured to direct hydrogen fuel to someplace other than the hydrogen fuel storage 104. The pre-cooling circuit 102 is configured to circulate the hydrogen fuel to cool the hydrogen fuel, the fueling line 108, the nozzle 106, the breakaway 124, and any fittings. A pre-cooling circuit connected to the fueling line 108 at one end and having any terminal point is considered to be within the scope of the instant disclosure.

Referring to FIG. 3, a hydrogen fuel dispenser 200 (hereinafter, "dispenser 200") is shown with a pre-cooling circuit 202 that directs hydrogen fuel from the fueling line 108 to someplace other than the hydrogen fuel storage 104. The dispenser 200 is substantially similar to the dispenser 100. The same reference numerals are used to indicate components in the dispenser 200 which are the same as those in the dispenser 100.

In the dispenser 200, hydrogen fuel may be fed into the fueling line 108 from the hydrogen fuel source 152. The feeding of the hydrogen fuel into the fueling line 108 from the hydrogen fuel source 152 may be direct or indirect.

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Additionally, in the pre-cooling circuit 202, the pre-cooling line 110 may feed hydrogen fuel from the fueling line 108 to the catch tank 116, through the compressor 118, and into the hydrogen fuel storage 104.

The pre-cooling circuit 202 of the dispenser 200 may further include a recirculation line 154 which takes hydrogen fuel from one of the hydrogen fuel storage 104 and the compressor 118. The recirculation line 154 may feed the hydrogen fuel from the hydrogen fuel storage 104 and the compressor 118 into the fueling line 108 at a position upstream from the connection between the fueling line 108 and the pre-cooling line 110. Alternatively, the recirculation line 154 may feed the hydrogen fuel from the hydrogen fuel storage 104 and the compressor 118 into the hydrogen fuel source 152. As a further alternative, the hydrogen fuel may be released into the atmosphere. In FIG. 3, the end of the recirculation line 154 is indicated with reference numeral 1. As shown, the end 1 may terminate at the hydrogen fuel source 152 or at the fueling line 108 in the first portion 128 thereof.

Though not shown, the end 1 may terminate as an outlet which releases the hydrogen fuel into the atmosphere. Depending on the end 1 used, the hydrogen fuel storage 104, the compressor 118, and/or the catch tank 116 may be omitted. For example, hydrogen fuel may be released into the atmosphere prior to reaching the catch tank 116; in such a configuration, the catch tank 116, the compressor 118, and the hydrogen fuel storage 104 may be omitted.

It is to be appreciated that additional regulating mechanisms may be employed to control the flow of the hydrogen fuel during fueling. Alternatively, the flow-path selector 112 may serve as the only or primary regulating mechanism used to regulate the flow and dispensing of hydrogen fuel during fueling (i.e., the flow-path selector 112 may selectively block and open the nozzle line 126, in different degrees, to control the flow and dispensing of hydrogen fuel).

The above description discusses the heating of the fueling line 108, the breakaway 124, the nozzle 106, and the fittings of the dispenser 100. However, it is to be appreciated that only a subset of these components may experience heating between fueling operations. It is also to be appreciated that the dispenser 100 may include other components that may be heated between fueling operations.

It will be appreciated that various of the above-disclosed and other features and functions, or alternatives or varieties thereof, may be desirably combined into many other different systems or applications. Also that various presently unforeseen or unanticipated alternatives, modifications, variations or improvements therein may be subsequently made by those skilled in the art which are also intended to be encompassed by the following claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A hydrogen fuel dispenser, comprising:

- a nozzle for engaging and dispensing hydrogen fuel to a receptacle, the nozzle including a nozzle line, disposed within a nozzle body, through which hydrogen fuel is dispensed to the receptacle;
- a fueling line connecting the nozzle line to a hydrogen fuel storage for communicating hydrogen fuel from the hydrogen fuel storage to the nozzle line, the fueling line connecting to the nozzle line within the nozzle body;
- a pre-cooling line connected to the fueling line downstream from the hydrogen fuel storage, within the nozzle body, for pre-cooling hydrogen fuel; and
- a flow-path selector provided at a connection between the fueling line and the precooling line within the nozzle body, the flow-path selector selectively: blocking

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hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line; and opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line; and

a pre-cooling controller detecting a predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition, and controlling the flow-path selector to: open hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected; and otherwise block hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line,

wherein the pre-cooling controller comprises:

a fueling operation detector detecting discontinuation of a fueling operation of dispensing hydrogen fuel to the receptacle based on inputs received from at least one of: a flow meter in at least one of the fueling line and the nozzle; and a sensor detecting engagement and disengagement of the nozzle with the receptacle; and

a timer configured to detect passage of a predetermined time following discontinuation of the fueling operation without resumption of the fueling operation, wherein the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected by the pre-cooling controller when passage of the predetermined time is detected by the timer, and discontinuation of the fueling operation is detected by the fueling operation detector when dispensing of hydrogen fuel to the receptacle ceases.

2. The hydrogen fuel dispenser according to claim 1, comprising a temperature sensor disposed in the fueling line at a position between the hydrogen fuel storage and the nozzle, the temperature sensor sensing a temperature of hydrogen fuel in the fueling line and communicating with the pre-cooling controller,

wherein the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected by the pre-cooling controller when the temperature of hydrogen fuel in the fueling line is sensed by the temperature sensor to exceed a predetermined temperature.

3. The hydrogen fuel dispenser according to claim 1, comprising:

a catch tank provided in the pre-cooling line, the catch tank holding hydrogen fuel at a low pressure.

4. The hydrogen fuel dispenser according to claim 3, comprising:

a compressor provided in the pre-cooling line at a position downstream from the catch tank, the compressor compressing hydrogen fuel from the catch tank for high pressure storage.

5. The hydrogen fuel dispenser according to claim 4, wherein the pre-cooling line connects the fueling line to the hydrogen fuel storage with the catch tank and the compressor disposed between the fueling line and the hydrogen fuel storage, the catch tank holding hydrogen fuel at low pressure, and the compressor compressing hydrogen fuel from the catch tank for high pressure storage in the hydrogen fuel storage.

6. The hydrogen fuel dispenser according to claim 1, wherein the flow-path selector and the connection between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line are disposed in the nozzle.

7. The hydrogen fuel dispenser according to claim 1, wherein the pre-cooling line connects the fueling line with

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the hydrogen fuel storage such that hydrogen fuel flows through the pre-cooling line from the fueling line to the hydrogen fuel storage.

8. The hydrogen fuel dispenser according to claim 1, wherein the pre-cooling line communicates hydrogen fuel back into the fueling line at a position upstream from the connection between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line.

9. A pre-cooling controller for a hydrogen fuel dispenser having a fueling line connecting a hydrogen fuel storage and a nozzle line of a nozzle for dispensing hydrogen fuel to a receptacle, a pre-cooling circuit including a pre-cooling line connected to the fueling line at a position downstream from the hydrogen fuel storage, and a flow-path selector provided at a connection between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line, the flow-path selector selectively: blocking hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line; and opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line, the pre-cooling controller comprising:

a condition detector detecting a predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition;

a fueling operation detector detecting discontinuation of a fueling operation of dispensing hydrogen fuel to the receptacle based on inputs received from at least one of: a flow meter in at least one of the fueling line and the nozzle; and a sensor detecting engagement and disengagement of the nozzle with the receptacle, wherein discontinuation of the fueling operation occurs when dispensing of hydrogen fuel to the receptacle ceases;

a timer detecting passage of a predetermined time following discontinuation of the fueling operation prior to resumption of the fueling operation; and

a flow-path selector controller controlling the flow-path selector to: open hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected by the condition detector; and otherwise block hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line, wherein the condition detector detects the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition when at least discontinuation of the fueling operation is detected by the fueling operation detector and passage of the predetermined time is detected by the timer.

10. A method for pre-cooling hydrogen fuel in a hydrogen fuel dispenser that includes a pre-cooling circuit in the hydrogen fuel dispenser, the pre-cooling circuit including a pre-cooling line connected to a fueling line of the hydrogen fuel dispenser at a position on the fueling line downstream from a hydrogen fuel storage and upstream from a nozzle line of a nozzle for dispensing hydrogen fuel to a receptacle, and a flow-path selector provided at a connection between the pre-cooling line and the fueling line, comprising:

detecting whether a predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition exists by:

detecting discontinuation of a fueling operation of dispensing hydrogen fuel to the receptacle;

detecting passage of a predetermined time following discontinuation of the fueling operation without resumption of the fueling operation; and

detecting the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition when passage of the predetermined time is detected;

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controlling the flow-path selector to open hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line when the predetermined hydrogen fuel dispenser condition is detected to exist; and

otherwise controlling the flow-path selector to block hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the pre-cooling line while opening hydrogen fuel flow between the fueling line and the nozzle line.

11. The method according to claim **10**, further comprising:

compressing hydrogen fuel in the pre-cooling line and returning the compressed hydrogen fuel in the pre-cooling line to the hydrogen fuel storage.

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